[Sharjah bazaar]

who wear the finery. Their *abbas*, or ankle-length gowns, are of silk or linen, sometimes of a coarse, sackcloth material, but they are dyed in a variety of colours, from red and brown to purple, and those of the merchants are hemmed and embroidered with gold and silver thread. The head-dress is often of brightly-coloured silk, bound with an *aggal*, and the crescent-shaped sandals are invariably decorated with stencilled dyes or gold thread. The wealthier classes are fond of displaying jewellery, and like to wear large pearl or diamond rings on their fingers; some wear ear-rings, giving them a piratical air, whilst others wear or carry amber necklaces, which they use for meditation and prayer as a Christian will use his rosary.

The shops in the bazaar are closed from midday to four o'clock, as the Arabs take a siesta after lunch—a custom bequeathed by their Moorish cousins to the Spaniards and observed in Spain to this day. This adjournment is not due to laziness, but is extremely practical, since the hottest time of the day occurs after twelve o'clock. At 4 p.m. the sun loses most of its heat and the streets are pleasantly cool. The shutters are then pulled down from the shop fronts, and the bazaar is thronged with gaily-dressed crowds of shoppers and sightseers.

The shops are merely open booths, or stalls, exposed to sand and flies, with the living quarters behind. As in China and mediæval Europe, some of the trades, such as those of the tinsmiths, silversmiths and leather merchants, are protected by guilds, and the members confine themselves to special parts of the town or bazaar. Thus in Sharjah there is a Street of Silversmiths, where these merchants exercise their craft to the exclusion of all other trades; Dubai similarly has a Street of Goldsmiths. These titles sound as though they had been taken from *Hassan* or the *Arabian Nights* and, indeed, the streets bear some resemblance to an Eastern stage setting.

The food shops are always interesting. The wares are displayed in little palm-weave panniers, and include cinnamon, nutmegs, ginger and spices, huge lumps of unrefined rock salt, dried peas and beans, attar flour, ghee butter, pea-nuts, curry powder, chicory and rice. Under the shop front hang rows of locally-grown tobacco leaves, strips of henna, and various kinds of salted, odorous dried fish. A variety of smells, pungent and aromatic, comes from these booths in the hot weather and can be detected from quite a distance.

The most colourful shops are those of the drapers, where the